

SUBJECT: Outcomes of Operation Chromite

1. Background: On 15 September 1950, the world was electrified by a bold amphibious landing deep in the enemy rear by United Nations forces fighting in Korea. At a stroke, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur had turned the tide against the seemingly invincible North Korean People's Army. In the next few weeks U.N. troops captured the South Korean capital, Seoul, broke out of the Pusan Perimeter, and were in hot pursuit north of the fleeing remnants of the NKPA. The landing, Operation Chromite, was the conception of the venerable Douglas MacArthur who used his towering military reputation and formidable powers of persuasion to overcome almost universal opposition from seniors and subordinates alike. The success of Operation Chromite had significant long and short term outcomes.

2. Discussion:

a. Immediate (Operational) Outcomes:

(1) The primary line of communication in the west for NKPA was interdicted, exacerbating an already dire logistical situation on the Pusan front.

(2) NKPA replacements earmarked for the Pusan Perimeter were diverted to the Inchon-Seoul area.

(3) Kimpo Airport, the largest in Korea, was restored to U.N. control and denied to the NKPA.

(4) The Inchon port facilities were restored to U.N. control and denied to the NKPA.

(5) Seoul was liberated with consequent political and psychological benefits.

(6) Frustrated NKPA forces engaged along the Pusan Perimeter were further demoralized (after a 4 day delay).

(7) The U.S. armed forces' reputation was greatly restored following the disasters of the summer.

b. Indirect (Strategic) Outcomes:

(1) General MacArthur's euphoria following his success in the face of near universal opposition led to his decision to withdraw X Corps in order to land on the east coast. This decision withdrew the X Corps "anvil" that was supposed to work with the Eighth Army "hammer" to block NKPA escape from South Korea thus allowing 20,000 to

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25,000 enemy troops, including several key leaders, to make their way to the north to fight again another day.

(2) General MacArthur's stunning coup at Inchon enhanced his already formidable military reputation, thereby blunting any opposition to his fixation that "the Chinese had missed their opportunity to intervene after Inchon." Efforts by some of his subordinates' (notably Generals Walker and Smith) to offset General MacArthur's failure to take prudent countermeasures against the possibility of massive intervention proved inadequate to stave off disaster.

(3) Inchon gave western military leaders a renewed appreciation for the value of amphibious operations in limited wars like Korea. This, in turn, insured the survival of the U.S. Marine Corps, an issue that had been placed in doubt in the face of the implications of the nuclear battlefield.

4. Conclusion: Operation Chromite was from first to last all about General MacArthur. It was his indomitable will that brought it about and his blindness in the face of his own brilliance that contributed to the subsequent disasters.

Approved By _____
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